

EMIGRE

Ivo Watts-Russell

(THIS MORTAL COIL)

4AD

Cocteau Twins
Throwing Muses
Vaughan Oliver
Nigel Grierson

THE
MAGAZINE
THAT
IGNORES
BOUNDARIES
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THE ART OF

23 envelope

"4AD HAS EXISTED FOR 1-1/2 YEARS NOW, ORIGINALLY
STARTED BY PETER KENT AND MYSELF WITH THE BASIC AIM TO
RELEASE WHAT WE CONSIDERED TO BE THE MOST EXCITING
AND ORIGINAL MUSIC OF THAT TIME. THE LABEL DEVELOPED
VERY NATURALLY - I THINK ONCE WE RELEASED THE REMA REMA
12" OUR STANDARDS WERE SET, AND I LIKE TO THINK (WITH
MAYBE ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS) THAT THOSE STANDARDS
HAVE BEEN MAINTAINED.

PETER LEFT IN OCTOBER 1990 TO MANAGE BAUMHAUS FOR A
WHILE, AFTER WHICH HE CONCENTRATED ON STARTING THE
SITUATION 2 LABEL AND SIGNING BANDS TO BEGGARS
BANQUET. I THINK WE'VE BOTH FOUND IT EASIER TO WORK
SEPARATELY; IT ALLOWS US THE INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM TO
INDULGE OUR DIFFERENT MUSICAL TASTES.

THE FIRST YEAR FOR 4AD WAS EXTREMELY GRATIFYING AND
FAR MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN I'D EVER IMAGINED. THE
SECOND HAS BEEN HARDER IN AS MUCH AS A CHANGE OF
DIRECTION HAS NOT COME ABOUT AS QUICKLY AS I HAD
HOPED. I'M IMMENSELY EXCITED BY DIF JUZ; THEY'RE
CHANGING AND DEVELOPING SO FAST, AND MATT JOHNSON'S
LP IS SOMETHING I ENJOYED WORKING ON. BUT MY HOPES TO
MOVE FURTHER AWAY FROM ROCK MUSIC, EVEN IN ITS
BROADEST SENSE, ARE STILL UNFULFILLED. THIS IS DUE TO
THE STUNNING NUMBER OF NEW GROUPS CONTENT TO IMITATE
RATHER THAN PIONEER. THOUGHTS OF LICENSING RELEASES
FROM ABROAD, SUCH AS ABORIGINAL CHANTS, HAVE BEEN
FRUITLESS DUE TO THE APPALLING SOUND QUALITY RATHER
THAN CONTENT.
WITH A NUCLEUS OF THE BIRTHDAY PARTY, MODERN ENGLISH,
DIF JUZ, AND COLIN NEWMAN, AND THE OCCASIONAL
OFFERINGS FROM MASS, LEWIS / GILBERT, MATT JOHNSON,
ETC. I'M CONFIDENT OF CHANGE AND A VERY VALID AND
VARIED OUTPUT - BUT MY SEARCH FOR SOMETHING FAR
REMOVED FROM ANYTHING I'VE EVER DONE WILL CONTINUE."

introduction

By TIM ARISTON

My earliest memory of anything related to 4AD Records is of a particular release or group, but rather the style of the most beautiful label I had ever seen, glad was a record opening magnificently around on a shop's turntable. Like a warm woman's blazon it pulled itself up over the disc's mid-section and gave me a merry feeling as well - indeed, a classic case of love at first sight - and even though the needle's interpretation of the grooves surrounding this luxurious first press print led to her to break the spell (The Thin "Condemned Subject," not one of my favorite singles of all time), I thought the thing anyway and gave it a washing review in issue 14 of *The Offense*, a feature I had started a few months earlier in April, 1980. Not long after that I spotted the same personified quill pulled partially away another yewster, so I presented it with the added warmth of my cheer and racing heart as I held it close under my coat while sprinting home through the autumn rain, and as far would have it, *Archie*: "Terror Couple Kill Colonel" let the critical jackass, becoming the number five "Single of the Week" And a mere three issues later, Denise Chaggar's "Annoyance" received the same honorary designation! I couldn't stand it any longer. I had to tell someone how 4AD how I felt about him, Graham, Steve Dugger, Bush-Bush, The Birthday Party, In Camera, Modern English. Hmm, all had released records during the label's debut year, and it was all too obvious to me from their rare collective richness that what these records represented was nothing less than the greatest music of their time. I felt inevitably fortunate to have been able to cross paths with the work of the one person left in the whole busy world who wasn't about to be taken in by any of the gimmicks going round at the time, but rather was content to simply find you so eloquently release what he recognized as music that deserved to be shared with others.

I said all a few back issues now really enjoying a response. I had done the same thing before with other awesome labels that I wasn't half as sure about though the people making these labels were able to discover my somewhat limited enthusiasm and thought "To hell with this Anwekka!", but amazingly he did write back, providing it is now old New York go with as big a chord as he could possibly stand. The view has simply released further records that nothing but add fuel to the fire, eventually giving me to the point where I am today - of not really caring whether any other labels ever and anything else said all right, a slight exaggeration there perhaps, but still it seems quite clear to me that since its inception 4AD Records has been as a league by itself, and what's better the more approving thing over the right years I've been publishing is that for some strange reason, the rest of the record buying public has not yet unanimously agreed with me on this point. Perhaps this issue of *Empire* will rectify the situation.

R. It's nice, I can just dial your number, ask for Ivo and get you on the phone immediately. 4AD is a small but very successful independent record company. I was afraid it was going to be impossible to reach you.

I. We're still really accessible.

R. Can everybody just call you?

I. Yes, pretty much. We're not hiding away!

R. Let me start with the most obvious question. When and why did you start 4AD?

I. It goes harder to analyze that each time... The preparations were made during the last few months of 1979. At that point it was myself and a guy named Peter Kent. We were both working for Beggar's Banquet at that time on the retail side of things. I wanted to figure out the mechanics of the independent industry. Simultaneously, Beggar's Banquet approached us and suggested we start an independent label under their wing. Peter was running the Beggar's Banquet office above one of their record shops. He also ran the shop, and I was kind of an overseer, general manager or whatever, of five or six different record shops. When people came to Beggar's Banquet (people such as Gary Numan, at that time) to bring by their demos, they would tend to see either me or Peter. We were always the first to hear all the demos that were brought in. For a while, we would take some of these demos upstairs to the Beggar's office and tell the people "We think this is really good, you should get involved with this."

And I think as a result of that, because Beggar's didn't have time or whatever, they suggested that we start a label that was within the Beggar's Banquet format, an independent label that would function as a steppingstone to move bands onto their own label. They had major distribution and everything at that time. They respected our ears. They wanted to carry on the daily making of their label, and we were effectively their A&R men. That was the original concept of it. So this offer

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Ivo Watts-Russell: "MODERN ENGLISH WERE A GROUP THAT HAD

BROUGHT DEMOS INTO BEGGARS BANQUET IN '79 AND WERE

ONE OF THE GROUPS THAT WERE PARTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE

LABEL STARTING. THE FIRST DEMO WAS BRILLIANT - REALLY,

REALLY GOOD. IT WAS ONE WE KEPT THRUSTING TOWARDS

BEGGARS, SAYING, 'YOU SHOULD DO SOMETHING WITH THIS!'

BUT THEY EITHER DIDN'T HAVE THE TIME OR WEREN'T

INTERESTED. SO MODERN ENGLISH WENT OFF AND RECORDED A

SINGLE ON THEIR OWN LABEL IN COLCHESTER, AND THEN CAME

BACK AFTER THEY'D DONE A SECOND SET OF DEMOS WHICH

INCLUDED "SWANS ON GLASS" AND "INCIDENT." BY THAT

TIME, THROUGH SALES OF OUR FIRST THREE SINGLES WE HAD A

COUPLE HUNDRED QUID AVAILABLE, WHICH WE USED TO PUT

MODERN ENGLISH INTO A STUDIO TO DO THE "SWANS ON

GLASS" SINGLE." (The Offense Newsletter)



VICTORIALAND

VICTORIALAND: Graham Trevelyan (Cover Artist)



All album covers reproduced in this issue were art directed and designed by Vaughan Oliver. All album cover photography is by Nigel Crismon unless otherwise stated.



Ivo Watts-Russell

Interview with Ivo Watts-Russell by Andy Munden (1991)



AFTER THE SNOW Helen English (Ostrich)



OUT OF THE TREES Jax (their show host and label)



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I'D WANT TO SAY, "WIRE WAS THE FIRST GROUP THAT I FELT WAS REALLY, REALLY IMPORTANT. IT SEEMED THAT THEY COULD DO ANYTHING, WHEREAS THE OTHERS DIDN'T EVEN SEEM LIKE THEY WANTED TO DO ANYTHING. THE FIRST TIME I SAW THEM, THEY WERE SO BAD, REALLY AWFUL, BUT THERE WAS SOMETHING SO BAD ABOUT THEM THAT I KNEW I'D BE SEEING THEM AGAIN, AND I DID. A VERY SPECIAL GROUP, THE ONLY GROUP WHO CONTINUED WHAT THEY SET OUT TO DO AND JUST PROGRESSED THROUGH THOSE THREE LPs. YES, A VERY SPECIAL, SPECIAL GROUP." (The Offense Newsletter)

coincided perfectly with my decision of trying and doing it myself. I didn't have any money, but they gave us a couple of thousand pounds to start the label. E. What was the first record you released?

I. We decided we wanted to release four singles. Of these four singles, two were already finished. The demo takes that were brought in were sort of finished masters and we released them as they were. Actually, two and a half were finished, with one we recorded the B side and with another we recorded the A and B side. We released all four records the first working day of April, on a label called Axis. The day we received finished records in our office we had a phone call from another company called Axis, who had read a press release saying that we were

starting a new label called Axis. They were good about it, they said all we had to do was tell off our stock! So we changed our name to aD.

2. Who were those bands?

I. Three of them were, and still are, completely unknown. They were Bours, who made a kind of strange pop-psychodic single, one was Shax, who did a fairly commercial sort of an electronic dance single, and another was The Fast Set. Their single was the only one we paid for. This was a guy called David Knight, who now works with Danielle Bux. The fourth single was by Bauhaus, who had their own record out on Small Wonder called "Bela Lugosi's Dead," and we released their next single, "Dark Entries."

3. How did you set up promotion and distribution for these first singles?

I. Distribution was a matter of manufacturing some records and taking around all of the different independent wholesale offices and export companies in England saying, "We're putting out these records, do you want to buy any?" It was a question of driving around London and dropping them off. H. As simple as that?

I. Yes, get in the car and try to get a check, you know, CDD basis.

R. You couldn't use Reggae's distribution channels?

I didn't want to really. That was the whole idea. While working in the music stores, me and Peter would watch the independent distribution network grow. You know, from Backbeat's releases and Still Little Fingers and Jay Division and the early Factory records. We wanted to use that system. And Rough Trade was like the central London arm of all of that. They had a very small record shop with a distribution system set up in the back of their shop. We would take a couple of hundred records down there and sell them to these and they would get on the phone and try to flock them to people.

R. Did you break even on those stages?

I. Actually we did. And you asked about promotion, but there was no promotion, we didn't advertise any of them. Promotion revolved around getting a couple of radio sessions for Bashkin and getting the records played on late night English radio, which means going down to the station and personally pushing them. It was all very localized, all taking place around London. Some of the distributions we got outside London. We would send a couple of hundred copies of the Bashkin record up to Red Rhino in York and out to other local distributors. These independent local distributors have now all become the branches of the Rough Trade Central distribution system in this country.

R. What happened with Peter Kern?

I. After the first year, his involvement had become slightly one-sided towards working with Bashkin. I

didn't feel I had any input into their lives and/or careers but Peter did. And they moved on to Beggar's Banquet.

The reason gAD had been set up in the first place was to function as a springboard to Beggar's Banquet, so it was an appropriate move for Bashkin to take. I felt it was relevant for that move to happen, and the group did too, because it got them a long-term contract with money. So they made that move, and they were the first and last gAD group to do that. Peter and I at that time had parted ways in terms of musical interest. gAD had become in our limited company by then. This was in the beginning of 1981. What he did was actually set up his own independent company within the same format called Situation Two.

R. Is gAD independent from Beggar's

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THE NEXT THING THAT HAPPENED WAS REMA-

WALKING IN, WHICH WAS JUST UNBELIEVABLE. I MEAN,

TO REALIZE THAT WE COULD RELEASE SOMETHING BY THEM

SUDDENLY MADE ME SEE THAT WHAT WE WERE DOING WAS

SOMETHING SERIOUS. SO IN ADDITION TO FINANCING THE

FIRST FOUR RECORDS, BEGGARS' LOAN WAS ALSO USED TO

BUT SOME RECORDINGS OF THIS FIFTH GROUP THAT HAD BEEN

FINANCED BY THE CHARISMA LABEL"

(The Offense Newsletter)

MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

"WE'VE ALWAYS FELT THAT THERE'S GENERALLY MORE WORTH IN MUSIC THAT DOES TAKE A LITTLE MORE TIME TO APPRECIATE. ONE WAY TO PRE-

SERVE THE 'QUALITY' OF 'STANDING UP STRAIGHT' WAS TO PRODUCE A DIFFERENT ACCOUNT OF WHAT IS GOING ON. THE LYRIC SHEET GIVES A NEW PRESENTATION OF THE MUSIC. YOU CAN READ AS YOU LISTEN. OR AT ANY OTHER TIME. UNLIKE SOME CHART SONGS THAT ARE PICKED UP AND LIKED

INSTANTLY. WE FELT THE LP SHOULD NOT RELY ON THAT EASY ACCESSIBILITY. WE BELIEVE THE SONGS ARE LASTING ENOUGH TO BE PICKED UP FIVE YEARS LATER." (Arrows)

MARK COX, The Wolfgang Press:

"I'VE BEEN REALLY DISILLUSIONED WITH THE PRESS. I'M FED UP WITH SEEING THEM SET PEOPLE UP LIKE THE BEST THING SINCE AIR THAT WE BREATHE, AND THEN ABOUT HALF A WEEK LATER CALLING THEM THE BIGGEST BUNCH OF CLUNTS UNDER THE SUN. WHEN WE WERE MASS WE GOT A LOT OF BAD

PRESS AND THAT KIND OF HURT AT THE TIME. PEOPLE REALLY MISUNDERSTOOD MASS ALTOGETHER. IT WORRIED ME. BUT IT'S THEIR LOSS. IT DOESN'T

BOTHER ME ANYMORE." (Abstract)

THE LEGENDARY WOLFGANG PRESS AND OTHER TALL STORIES The Wolfgang Press Choir debut



Ivo Watts-Ruggie "IN 1976 I WAS WORKING IN A BEGGARS RECORD SHOP. I'D BEEN WORKING IN RECORD SHOPS FOR FOUR YEARS. ALL I WAS REALLY INTERESTED IN WAS MUSIC. SUDDENLY ALL THESE INDEPENDENT RECORDS EMERGED AND IT BECAME VERY, VERY EXCITING TO WORK IN A RECORD SHOP. WHAT I REALLY ENJOYED, THOUGH, WAS THE SECOND WAVE OF PUNK IN 1979, THE ONE WHEN WIRE DEVELOPED INTO JOY DIVISION..."

(Melody Maker)

Barquet?

I. Yes, 4AD is owned by myself and Martin Mills, one of the directors of Beggars Banquet. But 4AD has creative and financial independence.

R. How did 4AD as a record label become so successful within such a short period of time? Do you have a success formula for 4AD?

I. I don't have a formula. All I ever wanted to do is make available records that have something unique to offer and make these available through our label. The music that we release should feel right on our label, and wouldn't feel right elsewhere. That was the only direction I've ever had, and somehow it remained stable financially. Also, I think I was in the right place at the right time when I started 4AD.

R. The name of 4AD often seems

more prescient than the hands that are recording on 4AD. Is that something that is done on purpose?

I. There certainly was a period when, musically, a lot of the groups could be pigeonholed into an independent category. Not necessarily with a 4AD identity, but in what we used to call a 'Rancid-as-Brigade' category, a sort of gloomy guitar-based music. That created an identity for the label which was a very temporary one, but which hasn't gone away. Also we developed a relationship with Vaughan Oliver from 21 Envelope and Nigel Grievson (the in-house designer and photographer at 4AD, who are responsible for creating a visual identity that has become respected and recognisable).

R. However, I feel that in a certain way, their sleeve designs have contributed to a visual identity more representative of 4AD than the hands. Is that done on purpose, to downplay the cult status of the hands?

I. No not at all. If the hands worried their phoson on the record sleeves, that would have happened. But if you meet somebody like Vaughan or Nigel, especially after you have seen the quality of work they have done and worked with them or through them, you learn to respect them and to aesthetically follow their guidance. If a hand feels the human image of the group is important, we will have their phoson on the sleeves. I don't really know how it works, but it seems that somehow, whenever we are down to the music of some of the artists, it almost goes without saying that they will be presented in

PUMP UP THE VOLUME *Rock. Noise. Loud.*

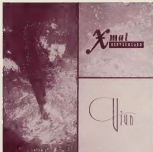
interview will probably be played in the same kind of restaurants that other cities with Boston, Los and Denver inevitably have had, vague friendly formations leaders with a continuity that doesn't in the cities. Instead, these. Making these don't imply that you are explain it, too.

Real People

Before making his, but when he can't find the necessary ingredients in the second generation, it becomes a little "just sugar, right?" he quips. And I understand, or is there a little of what he's saying? In the end we go coffee from the kind of large mug that prepares the average Irish youngster for the pub. Spontaneously we exchange information. Together with a technician friend, Boko has been working the past few hours on randomizing the living room into a recording studio. The music falls like fat on a stack of loose crates, like a blimey moment in a field hospital. With a sigh, Boko presents the only piece of equipment that has a special affinity about the other ones in a rack. This is all I've been able to afford so far. You collect things here and there. It's better to own it yourself. According to me it's much less expensive, you see? I see. "It's a problem to record on a regular neighborhood of New York for the singles or unrecorded music?" I ask, trying not to offend. "Music, no, everything is played in directly. We don't use mikes. It's singing it only added in the last phase and that's the exact water work."

There's probably how a gas in this city, a major. He's engaged, no record and no-empire, a tall out of this world and being into concept. Regular people after all, the kind to create the musical milieu. None of that rock-and-roll, big money, and high-kick thematic stuff. When he and I leave show up we move into the back room. They all sit down on the couch in front of me - three generations, real human beings. They answer and answer every question in the manner of retirement home residents. Those who haven't passed the time follow a different set of rules. One of these men is that the Cocteau Twins desire for themselves how the four are to be arranged. A Dutch or Belgian promoter who thinks he can finally cash in on the growing popularity of these Scots by booking them in a bigger place the next year around will be disappointed. Nothing is taken for granted, a dance hall is a

TINY DYNAMINE Cocteau Twins (Short story)



VIVA! Band Photo: David (Photo: David A. J. J. J. J.)

LIZ FRASER, Cocteau Twins: "I JUST WISH PEOPLE WOULD STOP COMPARING THE LIVE SHOWS TO THE RECORDS."

ROBIN GATHRIE: "THEY DO THAT BECAUSE IT'S NOT A WHOLLY LIVE THING - WE USE A TAPE. NOBODY IS EVER SURE HOW MUCH IS ON THE TAPE."

IT COULD ALL BE ON THE TAPE AS FAR AS SOME ARE CONCERNED. ACTUALLY, TO TELL THE TRUTH, WE'RE PLAYING A GIG TONIGHT. WE JUST SWITCHED ON THE MACHINE AND DIDN'T BOTHER TO SHOW UP. I WONDER WHETHER ANYONE WOULD NOTICE." (Melody Maker)

JVA WATTS RUSSELL: "THE COCTEAU TWINS AND COLOURBOX ARE

LICENSED TO VIRGIN RECORDS IN THE REST OF THE WORLD,

EXCLUDING NORTH AMERICA. IT'S A THREE-YEAR

ARRANGEMENT. THE REST OF THE GROUPS ARE OCCASIONALLY

RELEASED ABROAD, BUT I TEND TO WORK WITH INDEPENDENT

LICENSEES, WHEREBY I SELL THEM FINISHED RECORDS. I GOT

FED UP WITH HAVING LICENSEES ALL OVER THE PLACE WHO DID

VERY LITTLE FOR THE GROUPS AND EVEN FUCKED UP THE

COVERS. I QUITE PREFER WORKING WITH SMALLER

INDEPENDENTS WHO AT LEAST DISTRIBUTE TWO OR THREE

THOUSAND GOOD-QUALITY RECORDS IN THEIR OWN

TERRITORIES, WITH THE PACKAGING EXACTLY AS IT SHOULD

BE." (The Offense Newsletter)

and beyond that, an option on four of five more albums. Or there is the outrageous contract for, let's say, a five-year deal.

R. Has JVA signed any groups for a longer period of time?

I. Yes, there are two groups that we work with who are on long-term contracts, the Cocteau Twins and Colourbox.

K. What made you sign them for a longer period of time?

I. It just became essential to do it. I'd worked with the Cocteau Twins for about a year before we entered into a long-term contract. I thought it was important that they have a certain standard of living. Plus I desperately wanted to work with them forever, or as long as it is appropriate. And if you are representing people on an international basis, land this doesn't necessarily apply to

America so much but to the rest of the world, if you are licensing individual artists to other companies, or if you are doing a label deal, you have to have those groups under contract.

R. Why is America singled out?

I. For instance, we just finished recording three tracks with a new group called Fraser Chorus. Say I sent a copy of this record to every A&R man in America, and people came back to me wanting to license it in America. They would insist, if it were an LP, on having four or five options for further albums. For me to sign a piece of paper like that, licensing this product to them, I would have to have a contract with the artist myself for the same number of records. So what I am saying is that doing serious licensing deals in America affects the way that I continually have to work with artists here. There have been record companies in the States that were interested, but never in the right way. For the last two years, I've been spending time picking up the pieces of the previous five years and getting what I feel are the "right" label deals around the world, but America remains a territory where it's proving very hard to find a suitable licensing label deal. And yes, I do believe it won't be difficult to license the next Cocteau Twins album in America, or even the next Colourbox album, but I do think it will be harder through that same system to license a Dead Can Dance or Dif Juz record. I understand the size of the United States and the size of the corporations that need to be kept going and simply to put all the

mechanics into operation costs a lot of money. And unless one has a gripp that is prepared to play the game, they are unlikely to achieve anything. Major record companies need to make money and in order to do so they need to sell records and in order to do that the material obviously has to be appropriate for radio, so go beyond college stations, where we initially get our air play. This results having regularly touring groups and videos and all of that stuff, which most of our groups aren't particularly keen on doing. At least not to the extent that is expected in the United States.

Q. Can you become successful in the States with a4D without an American licensing deal?

A. No, not in a real sense. Maybe we can. The feedback, telephone calls, mail, whatever, that we get from America is probably the most intense in the world, but it is isolated. The intensity is probably partially due to the lack of availability. If there is something that you recognise as a stamp or a logo or a label that you know is probably going to be interesting, and if you have to make some effort to get hold of it, it heightens your enjoyment. So, yes, we have a profile and a following in the States, but it's really just the tip of the iceberg of what I feel it should be.

Q. So you really think there is a potential audience in the United States for a4D?

A. Well I am not talking in millions, selling platinum or anything. Most people who hear a4D will hear it through what I call the "underground." This is the kind of exposure that our records will get, and the

people who hear our music on the radio have to go out to try and find it. They have to go to import record stores. Now if these people could just go to any record store with the possibility of finding our records there, that would make a big difference in sales.

Q. You can go to any big chain record store here in San Francisco and you'll be able to find a pretty good selection of a4D records. They're expensive, but they do carry your records.

A. There are two things there. One, as you are saying, they are very expensive and they shouldn't be because we give good enough prices to the exporters, and two, you are talking about San Francisco, a major city. There have been people from all over the States who have been drawn to the label for one reason or another. They repeatedly

F I DON'T WAIT TO RECALL "YOU CAN NEVER KNOW OR PREDICT WHEN PEOPLE WILL NO LONGER SUPPORT YOU OR TURN AGAINST YOU, BUT I DON'T REALLY FEEL THAT WE'RE DOING THINGS THAT WILL REQUIRE THAT. THERE'S EITHER A PUBLIC THAT IS INTERESTED IN SOMETHING GENUINE OR THERE ISN'T, AND I JUST DON'T SEE THAT THE PUBLIC IS GOING TO GO AWAY. SO I FEEL CONFIDENT THAT WE'LL CONTINUE TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE AWARE OF WHAT WE'RE DOING, AND AS LONG AS WE'RE DOING THAT, THEN THERE'S A POINT IN US BEING HERE. IF THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO REQUIRE SOMETHING FROM MUSIC, THEN I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING TO OFFER."

(The Offense Newsletter)

COLOURBOX (Colours: Oliver Jones)



COLOURBOX (Colours: Oliver Jones)



COLOURBOX (Colours: Oliver Jones)



8. I recently heard the new *gD* release by Frasier Chones. How important is it to bring in new hands as opposed to putting more time and energy into working with the bands you already work with?

1. The two go hand in hand. It became interesting for all of us here to do something new after releasing the compilation album. I can't really explain why. New blood, new involvement, it just felt necessary. When we venture into these arrangements they are seen as "one off" commitments. Just one record to feel each other out, so if we are traveling along the same path. Certainly, the most important thing is what I've been doing for the last three years, which is believing we should concentrate all of our energies on fewer things because there is so much more to achieve for everybody. But within that you have to recognize that, for instance, Colourbox's last album was in 1986, since then they released two more EPs, about a year and a half ago. *De Jax* made one album in 1986, Dead Can Dance spent a year or a year and a half on each LP. The first six months of 1987 we released two EPs, one by the Throwing Muses and one by the Wolfgang Press. You can't maintain a momentum this way, and just in terms of cash flow, you have to release some records.

8. Do you demand from bands such as the Cocteau Twins that they put out a certain number of records? You said you have them under a longterm contract. Doesn't that include that they do some records?

1. It includes that we have rights to more albums but I don't insist on a certain time period, it would be pointless.

8. What contemporary bands outside of *gD* do you truly admire?

1. I always have to stop and think about that one. I enjoy Breathless, Denticle Appleton, who sings on "Flinging A Shadow" - that's his group. I still like Echo and the Bunnymen and I like aspects of what Jesus and the Mary Chain do. I used to like Felt a lot but they have been repeating themselves too much in recent years.

8. Have there been bands that you would love to sign but are not interested in *gD*?

1. I don't think so. How would I know anyway?

8. Do you go out to the clubs and search for new talent, or do the

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JOE WATTS SINGING "THE SONGS ARE ALL PRETTY DESPERATE,

MELANCHOLY... I HATE TO SAY IT BECAUSE I HAVEN'T

ACHIEVED THE SAME EFFECT BUT THE RECORD THAT'S ALWAYS

EXISTED AS UNIQUE FOR ME IN TERMS OF ATMOSPHERE AND

EFFECT IS LOU REED'S "BERLIN." THAT REALLY IS A

DESPERATE RECORD BUT SOMEHOW, WHEN YOU'RE DEPRESSED,

AND LISTEN TO IT AND IT SOUNDS RIGHT, IT ALMOST HELPS IF

THAT'S POSSIBLE." (Melody Maker)

you're at it that people present than across again that as a professional way.

Rebelle: There's no way you can pretend that it's a product, can you? If you're genuine about it, it's your mind, how do you think you can make the fact that you're likely to kill every one's success?

What are your thoughts about this, Lou?

Lou: I think that a lot of people have the idea that the publishers offer them an opportunity to act.

Rebelle: "Beige"

Lou: Well, now, that's not a matter of course. They just adapt their behavior, change their act. I'm not saying that they don't do this honestly or their daily lives. But we can't do that. We're just being ourselves and that comes across.

Do you adhere to certain music as a band? Do you think you owe the public a kind of attitude that is fair to them?

Rebelle: If you aren't honest, it was my records and performing. How can you expect your audience to be honest with you? For a lot of groups it's clearly an act. They'd like you to believe they're a group and that they want to be a certain music. Look at it, they say, "We only want to get facts and experience our music."

It's at least two sides. I don't want you, like in the dressing room after a performance, really uncontrolled such yourselves, swinging around in the room. Culture creep at all was totally interpreted as a sign of confidence.

Lou: "That's a sign of weakness or right. I am weak."

Wolfgang Press

STANDING UP STRAIGHT THE WOLFGANG PRESS OTHER BANDS

STANDING UP STRAIGHT THE WOLFGANG PRESS OTHER BANDS

WOLFGANG PRESS
STANDING UP STRAIGHT

8. What has changed most significantly since you first started J&B?

1. O god, so much... I think what has most significantly changed is the recent obsession with chart-based material.

8. The audience's obsession?

1. And musical! From the demos and tapes, we receive there is very little originality or identity and experimentation going on. You get the feeling that people are sending tapes to J&B that have gone first to CBS, EMI, everywhere. And if you called them up and said 'Okay you'll get this deal, you'll go into this studio with this producer.' They'd be happy. There are very few people who are themselves, where you hear the music and can know the people. And equally, there are less and less situations where people can actually get to a certain stage without the need of a record company. There is far less opportunity for people to play live in this country than there used to be. There is far less "fringe" radio support.

8. Why do you think that's so?

1. It's part of a larger decline of things. It's part of the economic recession that went on in the early part of the 80's, and the development of video and high gloss. People are losing faith in their ideals from the mid-seventies, when, by the beginning of the 80's, were all releasing free singles on an album with B sides, as a thousand. A lot of those ideals of the seventies vanished very quickly, and it didn't take long before people started entering this industry just to make money, rather than because it was the only way they could make their music available.

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120 WALLY DUNNELL "I'VE GOT A PAIR OF EARS AND A BRAIN AND AN

THIS MORTAL COIL.

8. When did you first come up with the idea to do a record yourself, and what was the initial response from the artists you invited?

1. From the very early days of the label's existence, I've always gone into the studio with the bands. I just wanted to be there and I wanted to experience as much as they did. Soon I began to see that especially with young... well actually it applies to more

OPINION. THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT. I DON'T HAVE ANY

ENGINEERING SKILLS. JOHN FRYER IS THE ENGINEER AT

BLACKWING STUDIOS, AND I ENJOY WORKING WITH HIM. I LIKE

HIS APPROACH: HE'S NOT CLOSETED LIKE A LOT OF ENGINEERS

AND HE HAS TAUGHT HIMSELF AS I HAVE, SO HE'LL TRY

ANYTHING. HE UNDERSTANDS MY PITIFUL LANGUAGE IN TERMS

OF DESCRIBING WHAT I WANT AND TRIES TO ACHIEVE THAT.

HE'S PREPARED TO GET SIDETRACKED AND TO TRY ANYTHING.

HE'S ALSO FULL OF IDEAS HIMSELF, SO WE PROGRESS

TOGETHER IN TERMS OF HOW THINGS WILL SOUND. IT'S A VERY

OPEN WORKING RELATIONSHIP. I DON'T SEE MYSELF AS A

PRODUCER: I MEAN, YES, I'VE INFLUENCED THE SOUND AND

THE DIRECTION OF THINGS THAT I'VE WORKED ON, BUT IN A

LOT OF CASES I'VE JUST BEEN THE PERSON TO TELL PEOPLE

WHEN TO START AND STOP. I SEE THIS MORTAL

COIL AS BEING THE ONLY TRUE PRODUCTION ROLE THAT I'VE

DONE. I'M IN CONTROL OF THINGS YET VERY OPEN OR

INDECISIVE. I DON'T KNOW WHICH IS CORRECT, AT THE

RECORDING STAGE. I ENJOY PLAYING WITH SOUND ONCE IT'S

RECORDED. JUST TAKING THINGS AWAY AND WORKING WITH

THE ELEMENTS OF WHAT IS ON TAPE THAT I FIND INTERESTING A

FEW MONTHS AFTER WE'VE ACTUALLY RECORDED IT. I DON'T

HAVE THE PROBLEM OF WORRYING ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF A

How long have you kept a tape of this?

Like: "Oh, I don't have it anymore."

I don't have it anymore. I used

to keep up on it. I started with a

few pages of a notebook and

later on it expanded. But I don't

send those volumes anymore.

Not and then contribute to

new ones?

Right. It seemed a neat

method for keeping yourself

like: "Phew."

Right. And you make that you

for the studio environment as

an environment to write songs.

Right. Oh, that's how we

recorded "Tributes" and "Philly

Developers." Simon and I just

start talking something.

Meanwhile El Guapo is at an

adjacent room, writing the

lyrics. After a while the tapes go

in again to the tapes we need,

and then out if only the words to

go with them. Most of the time

come out of a tape.

Like: "That's how it done"

Just like that, straight off the

top?

Right. It's usually somewhat

perfunctory and too easy. I think.

Like: "Yes."

No Difference

Right. Sometimes it gets real

fast sometimes it has to be

the music tape more often. It's

frequently (laughing) for her

for us, with an exception being

discussing it in music. I'm usually

generally faster and I work

sometimes faster, and it usually

takes a while before. Usually

has thought out some of her

particular lyrics again.

Is Simon a kind of catalyst in

the case? Sometimes who

contributes to your ability to

create?

Simon. "No! No! No!"

Right. "No means that he

doesn't put his belief in it

differs. Sometimes he comes up

with an idea, and when I hear it

it's usually better, and it usually

takes a while before. Usually

has thought out some of her

particular lyrics again.

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with an idea, and when I hear it

it's usually better, and it usually

takes a while before. Usually

has thought out some of her

particular lyrics again.

1. That's right. On that album, the majority of people contributing were fairly close at hand. They were either members of groups that I was already working with or friends or people that were suggested by friends. The whole thing came together fairly spontaneously, although it did take quite a long time to

field the entire album

R. Did you have the tracks written out before you went into the studio?

I. I just had a tape with a lot of existing songs that I wanted to try and interpret. And there were two original pieces by Lisa Gerrard. I knew she had some pieces of music that she could perform at any time, that existed outside of Dead Can Dance. These pieces dictated the atmosphere of the original music on the album.

R. You are now a musician yourself. How did the songs you picked, the existing songs, evolve? Do you write down arrangements? Can you actually write music?

I. Well, the way I do it is changing, but the bulk of the new arrangements of older material for that LP was started by Suso Ruysschaert of the Corvus Twins. I gave him a tape of perhaps three songs. He worked out the chords into a very basic structure. And as soon as you have that, the new basis of a song, then it just progresses. With "Kangaroo" for instance — and I don't know if you've heard the original Big Star version of that song, which is incredibly schambolic, totally apocalyptic, as if it were live, instead of being recorded in the studio, which would have been impossible to recreate — Simon just extracted the stricter, more regimented, elements of it with a bass line.

R. After you had the structure, then what?

I. Simon was at the studio on his own for about a week and put it all on tape and told me "I know what all the chords are," and that was enough. Again, with "Kangaroo," Simon played me the basic chords on bass guitar which we recorded. Originally, I wanted to do the entire song using basses, electric and upright bass guitar. But once we recorded the first electric bass, I started thinking about cello and violin. That's how I ended up meeting Martin McGarrick and Gini Ball, who play cello and violin. I met this one full who played acoustic bass with Marc Almond in Marc and the Mambos. I told him about the song we were working on and asked him if he could play the cello as well as the acoustic bass, but he couldn't. So he introduced me to Martin, who also played in the Mambos and is a cello player. I



JOE WATTS REELLED "HE LISTENED TO THE BASS GUITAR. I GAVE HIM

THE WORDS. HE RAN THROUGH IT AND SUDDENLY IT TOOK

SHAPE. THAT TERRIFIED ME BECAUSE IT WAS COMPLETELY

DIFFERENT TO THE ORIGINAL. IT WAS SOMETHING OF OUR OWN.

YOU KNOW, I THINK THE ONLY REASON GORDON AGREED TO

SING THE SONG WAS BECAUSE OF THE LAST LINES — "I WANT

YOU LIKE A KANGAROO." I THINK HE FOUND THAT QUITE

PERVERSE." (Melody Maker)

MICK ALLEN, *The Wolfing Press*

NEVER, EVER HAVE I THOUGHT OF OUR MUSIC AS WEIRD. WE DO CONSCIOUSLY SET OUT TO CREATE SOMETHING NEW, BUT NOT SOMETHING DETACHED

FROM WHAT'S HAPPENING, FROM HOW WE FEEL. IT'S STRONG AND IT DEALS WITH EMOTIONS WHICH, PERHAPS NOT A LOT OF PEOPLE DEAL WITH." (Sounds)

MARK COX, *The Wolfing Press*

"TO ME DURAN DURAN SAY, ARE WEIRD. I DON'T KNOW HOW ANYONE CAN LIKE ANY OF THOSE PEOPLE." (Sounds)



I'D HATE TO THINK "I HOPE THAT SOMEWHERE, IN THE BACK OF HER MIND, LIZ (FRAZER) WILL REALIZE THE RESPONSE AND RESPECT THAT IT'S GRADUALLY EARNED AND THAT SHE'S COME TO HEAR SOMETHING TO HER, EVEN THOUGH SHE'S BEEN CRITICAL OF HER OWN PERFORMANCE. SHE MUST BE ABOVE THE STANDARD OF QUALITY WHICH ONE COULDN'T REALLY FALL THAT FAR BELOW FOR ANYTHING TO BE WORTHWHILE."

(Melody Maker)

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agreed to do it. And I am glad he finally did it, because he has an incredible voice. With Cindytalk he uses his voice as a weapon really, but he can sing beautifully.

R. Why did he say so tentatively?

I. I don't think he ever thought about doing anything outside of his own project. Cindytalk.

R. You have a distinct preference for a few artists when it comes to doing cover versions. There are those Tim Buckley songs you did.

I. The Buckley, throughout his career, and I don't know how many records he made, eight or nine, went through so many different phases and flows of music, and, to me personally, achieved so much. And his voice... well anybody would recognize that I enjoy the human voice, and I find Tim Buckley's quite exceptional. And "Song To The Siren," which I ended up doing on "I'll End In Tears," is probably the most beautiful song ever written by anybody.

R. Yes, and the cover version is not bad either. Elizabeth Frazer does a great job singing it.

I. Yes, but she hates it, you know.

R. When you interpret other people's songs, David Byrne's "Dress" for instance, the interpretations are so far removed from the originals that they become something entirely new. Why do covers at all?

I. Well, I have to say that I am building it totally whenever I go into the studio

called him and he came down and we started talking about stringbays and he mentioned Girl Bull. That's how I was fed from one person to another.

R. When the artists were in the studio together, or did you record each track separately?

I. There was occasional crossover. It was all going on spontaneously. While recording, a certain part would work and suggest something else, so I would get on the phone with someone. For instance, after doing the original bass and putting the cello onto "Kangaroo," I thought of Gordon Sharp singing it. So I got on the phone with him and said we're doing this song would you like to come down and sing it. And he said no. And I said please and he said well... what is it. So I read him the words and he really liked the last line, and finally

R. You're what?

I. Bunking, improvising. But "Drugs" is really an interesting and strange example. I got this sort of official Warner Brothers live bootleg album of the Talking Heads with "Drugs" on it, which was originally called "Electricity." It was a live recording of the song before they released it on the "Fear Of Music" album. I wanted to do an arrangement of it exactly the same as the way they did it live. So on tape, what we recorded was a version of "Drugs" using electric guitars, many electric guitars actually, bass and drums. I was happy with the musical arrangement that we got, and it was close to the original live recording, but I had a real problem approaching it vocally. I asked somebody to do it and to be perfectly honest it was very hard to get away from David Byrne. And what happened was that I had to scrap the song. Alison Limerick had come and she'd sang some kind of a backup. But I just couldn't make the lead work. What I ended up doing, which is something I enjoy doing with drums anyway, was getting the drums up and sticking on a lot of cascaded delays. This way you create a completely new and complicated rhythm out of a very simple drum pattern. So I did that for a little linking section. We were doing that all the time, just sticking stuff down on tape and making down linking sections. I really liked those drums and started to reintroduce, after first scrapping "Drugs," elements of the music back onto the drums and started out the hits I felt did work. Then I did a mix of the pieces of music I wanted to use, and had Alison

Limerick come back in and sing like on top of that mix. So that's how that version ended up coming out, totally different from what I first intended it to be, an exact copy of the original.

R. As a whole, I feel that your second This Mortal Coil album "Higbee & Shadow" is a much more complete album than your first, "It'll End In Tears." On "It'll End In Tears" the songs seem to be quite diverse in mood and character, almost as if it was a compilation album. Although you use various artists and arrangements on both albums, "Higbee & Shadow" has a more homogenized and consistent sound to it. Can you elaborate on this?

I. It's experience. With the first album, I had thought about linking the tracks and creating a more

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Joe Watter: "TIM BUCKLEY'S 'STARSAILOR' IS ONE OF THE

MOST UNCOMFORTABLE RECORDS I'VE EVER HEARD. I STILL

FIND IT A DIFFICULT EXPERIENCE LISTENING TO IT AND, AT THE

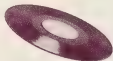
END OF SIDE ONE, THERE'S THIS BEAUTIFUL SONG, "SONG TO

THE SIREN", AND HIS VOICE IS FUCKING STUNNING. IT'S

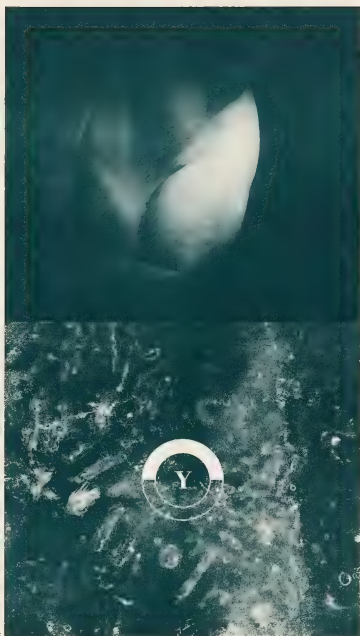
PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT SONG EVER TO ME, IT'S

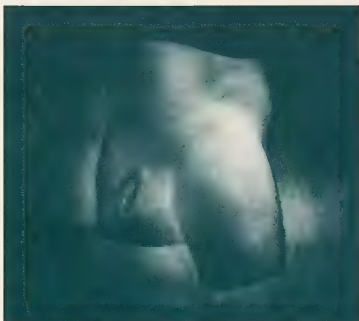
MOVED ME MORE THAN ANYTHING." (Melody Maker)

Continued on page 13



The following eight pages were specially designed for *Enquire* magazine by 23 Envelope, the in-house design team at 4AD records. Vaughan Oliver designed two spreads: the "XY" project, and "Surfer Rosa" which uses artwork and photographs that are featured on the recent Flies sleeve. All photographs are by Susan Larkalaster. Chris Rigg, the latest addition to 23 Envelope, designed two pages that are inspired by 4AD productions. "Tom Cooney Home (Homo)" is a Wolfgang Puma song from "The Legendary Wolfgang Puma..." album, and "Finally It" is a Peter Dinklage track from "Sleep With The Fishes"





COMING HOME

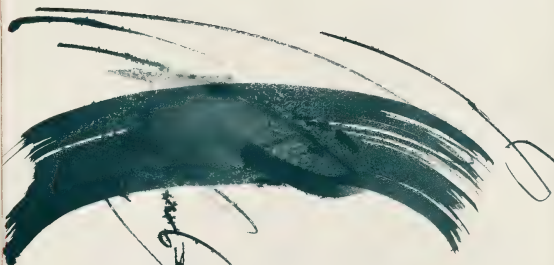
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Pixies SURFER ROSA



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BRENDAN Perry, Dead Can Dance:

"WE'RE REALLY DISAPPOINTED WITH THE FIRST ALBUM IN TERMS OF THE POTENTIAL OF THE MUSIC. THE RECORDING PROCESS IS TRYING TO, IN MATERIAL TERMS, COME AS CLOSE TO THE POTENTIAL OF THE IDEAL THAT YOU ARRIVE AT IN THE CREATIVE VISIONARY PROCESS. AND IT FELT FAR SHORT OF OUR EXPECTATIONS FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS. OUR INEXPERIENCE IN THE STUDIO. WE WERE DETERMINED ON PRODUCING IT OURSELVES BECAUSE WE FELT WE WERE IN THE BEST POSITION TO PRODUCE OUR MUSIC, HAVING CREATED IT. AND ALSO WE FELT IT WOULD BE A VERY EDUCATIONAL PROCESS IN ITSELF. WE DIDN'T GET ON WITH THE ENGINEER AT ALL. SO IT WAS A STRAINED ENVIRONMENT WITHIN WHICH TO WORK. AND I DON'T THINK THE STUDIO WAS VERY GOOD FOR OUR PURPOSES. IT WAS BASICALLY BUILT OUT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE EARLY MUTE GROUPS, YAZOO AND DEPECHE MODE. IT WAS RIGHT FOR THEM BECAUSE ALL THEIR MUSIC WAS PRACTICALLY ON LINE. IT WAS ALL SYNTHESIZER. OUR MUSIC DEMANDED A NATURAL LIVE ACOUSTICAL SOUND. BECAUSE WE WERE USING PREDOMINANTLY ACOUSTICAL INSTRUMENTS, AND WE WERE RHYTHM ORIENTED."

(opium)

continuous sound. But it didn't work. While we were completing the songs, recording them and mixing them, we were postponing the decision of looking. When it came to the final assembling, we tried to construct elements to create the linking sections, and it sounded very false to me. There are parts where it is continuous, and where I felt it worked. In some cases I recognized I was trying to fit a square peg into a round hole. From having had that experience, which in a sense was a disappointment, I really wanted to have what would be continuous music on the second album. So I started to create those linking poems as the tracks were being recorded. I started to plan it. You have to try and map it out as you go along and that's why it worked better on the second album. There are still some poems I am less

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comfortable with and there were some incredible failures. I would decide that certain songs would blend and by hook or by crook I was going to make them work, but ultimately I had to step back and say, "Look, you don't have to make them into one, just do something else."

R: Will there be another This Mortal Coil album?

I: I hope so. I started working on it in February or March '91. I had four days in the studio. I went in on my own and I was pleased that for the first time I managed to play and do arrangements of existing songs and then from that wrote a piece of music which could be the springboard for ideas. This is the first time I actually worked out an arrangement for existing songs and played them myself. Again I was pleased that I didn't have what I had done. So yes, I am sure there will be another This Mortal Coil album eventually. It's vital that I can apply the same degree of quality control to things that I do myself as I do to other people's work. And it's difficult, because alongside those projects I have to run the business of A&D.

R: Do you prefer studio music over live music? You mentioned that most of the hands you sign come from you listening to their demos and you also said you were rarely going out to the clubs anymore to listen to live music. Are you a studio music person?

I: I suppose so. I still really enjoy seeing good bands playing live. There are fewer places for people to

play in London. There are quite a few reasonable places to play that have 2000 or more seats, or there are some pretty bad live places. However, the middle ground is very difficult. There aren't many places where there is a lot "happening," so I don't actively go out to see things that often, but I still enjoy it. It's different. I don't think that groups should be overly concerned about releasing their live music in the studio. I think you can do a lot more in the studio. Equally, I don't think that in a live situation you have to realize exactly what you have done in a studio. Studio and live music should be considered as two different animals.

R. Live shows do give the audience an honest look at the bands and function as great promotions. How do you feel about the lack of live performances by some of the xAD bands?

I. I can totally sympathize with people who aren't interested in spending a three or four month period on the road. You go crazy. I do get frustrated sometimes when the opportunity arises for a tour. When a group or artist has reached a certain level when they can play a lot everywhere and they don't. I get frustrated sometimes by what I see as a missed opportunity.

R. Earlier you mentioned that the kind of music you like is the music that gives you a feeling for the people behind it. I think that goes way far beyond that across it by performing live.

I. Don't get hung up on that point because it's twofold. The Wolfgang Proux, who recently went to the U.S. for a son day one really enjoy playing live. However, it's not as easy for them to get live gigs all over the world as it would be for the Cocoon Twins. For instance, for Dead Can Dance, which is now a thirteen piece group, it is financially difficult to tour. So there are certain obstacles. Either a lack of popularity, or too many people, or just the reluctance to tour, which is true of the Cocoon Twins.

R. I read this interview with Brian Eno. I forget where, and he talked about musicologists who have said that everything pop music lists are doing was really known by almost all. This said this might be correct in terms of compositional written down on paper, but they ignore where the true innovation is taking place, which is in dealing with someone in music that's being done

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AND WHAT ABOUT "I LIKE THE COMPACT DISC FORMAT. IT'S NOT

GOING TO GO AWAY, AND I LOOK FORWARD TO IT ACTUALLY

BEING A SERIOUS ALTERNATIVE TO VINYL. VINYL IS

RESTRICTIVE, OBVIOUSLY IN TERMS OF QUALITY, BUT ALSO IN

ITS LITERAL LENGTH. COMPACT DISC, IF IT DOES BECOME AN

ACCEPTED NORM, WILL MEAN THAT ALBUMS WILL NO LONGER BE

FORTY MINUTES LONG BUT CLOSER TO SEVENTY MINUTES.

WHICH IS GOOD." (The Offense Newsletter)



Throwing Muses

By Atto Squisito

"When love grows distant,
the first we can do, please
do it to rid the torture of
a longing and romantic
passion. But if you go
the hell, I will jump and
and people think there's
something about a jumping
it is a matter of
choice, how old are you?"

"Twenty."
I thought for a moment. How
the hell does someone get in
it at his time when they're
20, especially an applied
theoretical student from Rhode
Island? It's ridiculous. It's too
farther.

"You are a failure in the
academic industry of things
you do never understand that
if you even had an idea of
that you'd never be called
for questions. It's not God
has a shot at a doctorate and
I think I should be even less
you should be grateful that at
all you discover something
to be such a precious, perfect
thing."

She grinned broadly and I
was left wondering what had
happened to her. I thought
someone must have to be
giving up the information and
the newspaper. You only
have to walk down the street
or something on a
cyclical, an is a whole
decreased. I don't. It's possible
that before this murdered,
I there was no fear, no fear of
the dark, no fear of the
water, no fear of other
people.

"You are an experience. You're
always smiling."

So what are you, you said
you found? Cosmopolitan
Mundanity is. One of you's a
baker, one's unemployed and
one used to play in a park.
Rush.

"I find it amazing that very
superficial people always
have to have layers of
deliberate illusions draped
over things in order to make
themselves more real. You're not
better than a reporter, you
were always and earlier.
Why should I keep a piece of
an equal just to you can
make me? Given your own
material, it is not, and with
no own feelings."

The boy for her side, signaling
the end of the river and
signaling the end of the river
and signaling the end of the river
was David.
Rushes, the like to know, was
use to and for the same
"Xiphioid enjoys nature" for
the end
Rush.

"Turned inside" (epitaph)
Tang.

"We all do" (epitaph) Leslie
Now there were four voices
driving music
"My name is David, my name
is David"
Like who is?
Like yours. Like anyone's

KRISTIN Herish, Throwing Muses

"THE FIRST TIME I HEARD MY OWN VOICE? WE WERE RECORDING IN A MOBILE UNIT IN THIS STREET BECAUSE I'D BROKEN MY LEG. THE SONG WAS

PRETTY AND HARSH. THEN THEY PLAYED IT OVER THESE BIG SPEAKERS, AND THE DOORS OF THE VAN WERE OPEN SO MY SONG WAS BOOMING OUT

INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD. AND I REALIZED THAT WHEN YOU RECORD A SONG IT'S NOT YOURS ANYMORE. IT HAS A LIFE OF ITS OWN AND SUDDENLY

HEARING SOMETHING THAT IS PART OF YOUR BODY, OUT THERE, BEYOND YOUR CONTROL, ENTERING OTHER PEOPLE'S LIVES - IT WAS TOO MUCH FOR

ME. I JUST COLLAPSED. CRYING, EVERYONE HAD TO HOLD ME UP." (Melody Maker)

And show them at they
ought to be. There's a special
maneuver in a crawling
personality and, as such, one
could never show it as it is.
However, without can be
anything but every club."

In that really what you're
talking about?

It's wrong. Maybe

maybe not.

The river laughed. We

poisoned her nature. We

endowed it with variable

reactions. We're poor

animals.

I suppose I should be

suggested that some of the

self-paying royalties I play

with are common with

efficiency class. But they do

the most famous of us, the

victims of mother and gods

are the last arrival, the

most unknown. I know that

when I was twelve."

If Kruger has a rule then it's

a barbarian. The barbarian of

the desert with barbarian

experience. Barbarian

penetration and barbarian

hazards. Savage thoughts

near savage tales. It should

that be the other way

around?

"You're either or both

A hardly important. You're

missing the point."

"We were here once,"

unhappy David

"But unlike others who

pretend to do the same, we

don't profit. We're

passions," said Tanya, her

voice raised. "We

document lives."

Hopkins passed?

"Yes. There's no reason that

hasn't been true. It's a

necessary fiction because

where it ends here begins

down here in return when

it's been said whether it's

chaotic by violence and

low or simply by education

the effect is the same: it

becomes worthless and, in

the process, even self-interest

like the compass of a

manuscript."

But you're married, you have

a child.

"Plan forms even the

unconscious to be

unconscious."

Is that a confession?

"Maybe, maybe not. Though I

mean neither. I'm just a little

in love with my past."

What are your plans?

"Nothing. I have none. I'm

nothing to do with the

diva's year income."

Why should anyone?

"Because you philosophers,

critics and biographers are all

the same: you're nothing

compared to what you

deserve. You lack courage, fury

and that's your sad, ugly

defining mark."

"Defining mark for the Twentieth

Century and all that. The Twentieth

Century."

JOHN LONELY IS AN EVERETT 4AD Composite Photo Ltd



JOE WATTS RUSSEL, "JUST RECENTLY "VICTORIALAND" WENT TO #18 IN

THE NATIONAL CHARTS HERE IN ITS FIRST WEEK, WHICH WAS A

VERY GOOD ADVERTISEMENT FOR THE INDEPENDENT INDUSTRY

AND A VERY GOOD ADVERTISEMENT FOR 4AD AND THE COCTEAU

TWINS. YOU CAN DO THAT WITHOUT HAVING TO SUCCEED AND

WITHOUT HAVING TO HYPE. JUST GENUINE SALES CAN GET YOU

THERE, AND IT'S A GOOD FINGERS-UP TO THE REST OF THE

INDUSTRY THAT DOESN'T BELIEVE IT'S POSSIBLE WITHOUT

THEIR WAY OF DOING IT." (The Offense Newsletter)

In studio today. Do you feel that

what you are doing is innovative?

I. Yes, but even apart from the

innovation Eric is talking about,

within the context of popular

music, a lot can still be expressed,

just through individuality. I am

talking about a more traditional

structure of a group. Through your

own individuality or naivete, or

excitement or talent, you can

produce something totally valid

and even innovative.

R. Earlier we talked about the

media pigeonholing certain bands

as making 4AD music. I think this

means that 4AD has enriched our

vocabulary for describing music.

With new forms of music appearing,

how do you think our concept of

music is changing?

I. Very slowly. I am amazed at the

consciousness of the average

member of the public. Today's

music is so repetitive and nonexpressive.

And music is no longer as important to people on its own. It

is absorbed and experienced in so many different ways now, with cable television, with the refutation

for a punchy little film soundtrack for every major film. It's not just music anymore. People just aren't

getting excited by a group and the way they develop. It's coming at you from all sides. It's hard for

young people to differentiate and recognize what the music is for. Is it the video, is it the film, is it the

single? Music just seems part of the machinery of an industry. It's about making money.

R. Well, it is. Over the years, quite a few people have come to depend on music as an industry. And I

think you will never be able to turn that around.

I. There's no need for that, but I would hope that the people who are making music themselves, even

alongside the desire of making money, would have a desire to record something that is completely

their own. In the States, groups would record an album every six months and each album would be

radically different from the previous one. Now it takes four years to record an album and they will still

be releasing singles from the same LP four years down the line. It's so uninspiring.

R. In a review of "Tribute & Shadow" in *Variety* magazine, the reviewer wrote, "Enjoy this record little by

little. If you listen to this all at once you will overdose on too much history." I do agree that "Tribute &

Shadow" is a very beautiful album. If you consider what you are doing as a form of art, does it bother

you that this is the prize you are getting?

I: No. If the music makes a response, that's great. If you ask me if its wrong in spite of exploring the potential emotions that can be triggered through this record, I don't think so. I think there is a place for it. Certainly there's a place for it in my heart. That's all I can be inspired by.

R: When you are in a position to release your own records, as you are doing, picking your own musicians, arrangers, etc., don't you make things too easy on yourself by letting out one ingredient, which is a certain amount of criticism? Most bands do have to deal with this when they want to have their music released. The word "self-indulgence" has sprung up quite a few times in reviews of your work.

I: I can't deny self-indulgence. Of course it is. It has to be. It keeps me inspired enough to remain in this business. I am surrounded by people who I personally find incredibly inspiring as artists, whether they are graphic designers, photographers, musicians or engineers. I am surrounded by people whose talents I admire. I feel I have to try and contribute to some kind of creativity myself to keep myself engaged. It's also an outlet, it enables me to deal and carry on with a lot of the business bullshit. But it isn't that easy. And I've been criticised for creating an incestuous atmosphere. On "Figures & Shadows," you read names such as Mark Cox, Andrew Gray and Dave Curtis, they are all in groups that I work with. But the

amount of time they spent in the studio was less than an hour each. Simon Raymonde's work, which appears all over the record, was all done in three days, right at the beginning of the record. From there on I made a conscious effort to work with people whom I didn't know, apart from Martin Garrick. It wasn't that easy. A lot of that is my pride as well, wanting to show that This Mental God wasn't the 4AD house band. There was a strange kind of resentment with the partial success of the first album with some of the people who played on that album. I also didn't want to live with that. I didn't want to feel that because I was working with people who were my friends, I was using them. I wanted to be sure of a one time thing kind of a session.

R: What would be the biggest

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Iva Watts replies: "SOMETHING I ALWAYS TRY TO HANG ONTO IS THE

FEELING THAT I USED TO GET WHEN I WAS YOUNGER, THE

FEELING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF RECORDS, OF MUSIC. THE

EXCITEMENT I USED TO FEEL WHEN I WOULD BUY A RECORD

AND, YOU KNOW, GETTING HOME, THE ANTICIPATION OF

LISTENING TO IT. THE THING OF ACTUALLY SPENDING A LOT OF

MONEY ON BUYING A RECORD, THE FEELING THAT THERE'S

SOMETHING BEYOND JUST THAT VINYL, THAT THERE'S A FEELING

OF THE SINCERITY AND PASSION COMING THROUGH FROM EVERY

PART OF THAT THING THAT YOU SPENT ALL YOUR MONEY ON.

THAT IT'S SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT TO HANG ONTO.

ULTIMATELY, THAT IS STILL ALL THAT I REMAIN - A FAN OF THE

THINGS THAT WE DO." (The Offense Newsletter)

LONELY IS AN EYESORE 4AD Compilation (Continued)





LOVELY IS AN EYESORE aMO Compilation (Error cover)



JOE WATTS RASHEL: "IT REALLY WOULD BE WISHFUL TO THINK THAT EVERYTHING THAT WE RELEASED WOULD HAVE THE LONGEVITY THAT VELVET UNDERGROUND OR THE DOORS OR WHOEVER HAVE. BUT I'M DAMN SURE, THAT A NUMBER OF OUR RELEASES REALLY DO HAVE THAT SPECIAL QUALITY TO THEM, THAT TIMELESS QUALITY TO THEM. THEY ARE IRRELEVANT OF THE TIME AND THE INFLUENCES AND THE TECHNOLOGY THAT WAS AVAILABLE AT THE TIME, AND THEY STAND AS WORKS THAT MIGHT OFFER DIFFERENT THINGS IN THE FUTURE BUT WILL ALWAYS OFFER SOMETHING TO THE LISTENER IN THE YEARS TO COME."

(The Offense Newsletter)

compliment I could give you regarding the two This Moral Cost albums?

I. Nothing too grand. That they were very special and significant recordings to you whether you had five or five thousand records, and that you were fond of them. Does that make sense?

R. Yes, because they are very special to me right now. What would be the biggest insult?

I. I don't know. I guess if you thought they were totally self-indulgent and not valid outside the self-indulgence but still that wouldn't be an insult. It would just be a shame that I wasted my time for you and everybody who would say that.

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Sleeve design

R. How did you get in touch with Vaughan Oliver and what was the first sleeve he designed?
I. When we started the label and released the first Modern English single "Songs Of Glass," we had a guy named Mark design the sleeves. I forgot his last name. When we released their second single, "Gathering Dust," I contacted Mark who was unavailable. So he put me in touch with somebody else who happened to be going to America and he in turn put me in touch with this chap called Vaughan Oliver. I called Vaughan, who at the time was working for a design company called Michael Peiers and Partners, and he came to see me. The idea that the group had, which they had already done themselves on a T-Shirt, was to work around a Diane Arbus photograph of a nude couple sitting in a room in a swivel colony with a poodle in the background. And on their T-shirt, they had replaced the poodle with a television with Modern English scratched into it. Funny enough, when Vaughan's portfolio was a version of this very same photograph by Diane Arbus, that he too had done something to. I can't remember what he had done to it, but it was a very bizarre coincidence. So that was the first single he did and from then on we kept in touch and he did the first and second Modern English LP covers and one or two Modern English singles and that was about it, until he came to work for us fulltime in 1985. By then we had built up a friendship and a lot of sympathy for what he was doing.
R. For a small, independent label such as aMO, it seems quite a luxury to have a graphic designer on

staff. How important is sleeve design for you?

I. Tremendously important in the context of starting an independent label, independent stands for artistic freedom. And it was Vaughan who educated me to recognize that this could be applied to graphic design and photography as well. Sleeve design has become an important outlet for his work, and I am proud that this is so. I like him to pioneer and develop what he is doing with sleeves just as much as I like musicians to experiment and pioneer with their music.

R. Is Nigel Grierson on staff as well?

I. Until about two years ago, he was attending the Royal College of Art here in London doing a course in film and photography. After completing his first film, which is called "Maximum," he left college and we did employ him for a year and a half to work on the "Lonely Is an Elysium" project and to shoot island sleeves that were done at that time. But since that project is finished, he is working freelance again.

R. It must take a pretty decent bite out of your record publishing budget to produce the type of sleeves you do. What is your budget for the sleeves?

I. We don't sit down and work out a specific budget for each record. Vaughan's contribution to what I consider the strength of what we are doing as a label has certainly equaled that of any one individual or group that we are working with.

So in the same way as I would

expand and progress working with a

group, assuming that their

creativity was guaranteed or

continuous. As Etonscape has

developed and its budgets have

expanded, it affects things across

the board. I mean the budgets are

huge. I just saw last year's figures.

Our turnover had doubled, but our

production costs had tripled.

R. But you still see the money going

on sleeves as a valuable thing to

do?

I. Yes. From time to time I talk to

Vaughan about this and perhaps

warn him that if the bubble bursts

and we really are under extreme

financial pressure, he is going to

feel it more than anybody else.

He'll have to do with using less than

four colors, you know, more

restrictions.

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Vaughan Oliver handles all art direction and design for 4AD under the name of 43 Dovecote. He studied graphic design at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic under Terry Dowling between 1976 and 1979 and began collaborating on record sleeves in 1980 as 4AD was producing its first releases. The following interview with Vaughan Oliver (V.) was conducted by Rudy VanderLans (R.).

R. You went to school at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic and studied under Terry Dowling. How influential was he on your work?

V. Terry Dowling has been quite influential in terms of attitude. We didn't learn any particular skills there, but more a sort of general approach to things. He taught us to utilize mistakes, to change route along the way and not just stick to one idea. He has a very idiosyncratic approach to type and design and illustration. He always collected these bits and pieces on his travels, chocolate wrappers, photographs of shop fronts that he worked with. He was very influential on a whole school of illustrators in England about ten or fifteen years ago, people such as Russell Mills, Sue Coe, Ian Pollock and Robert Mason. They didn't study under Terry but they all knew and admired his work and they were strongly influenced by him. All of these people at one point or another came to Newcastle to teach. The Quay brothers too, taught classes there and were also influenced by Terry.

R. So there wasn't any real classic typography taught?

V. If there was I didn't notice it.

R. Some of your typographic work seems quite classical, though.

V. I think I was very ignorant in college of the potential of type. I wouldn't necessarily blame it on the tutors, but maybe on my own narrow-mindedness. I used to concentrate mainly on illustration, even though it was a graphic design course, and I came out of school with an illustration portfolio.

R. That had a lot to do with Terry Dowling?

V. Yes, I mean, he would try and push us more towards design and try and tell us about type and packaging. But I preferred to be more self-indulgent. I suppose. However, it's the same energy that went into the illustrations then and is now devoted to typography. I don't do any illustration anymore.

R. Do you miss doing illustrations?

V. Not really, because I hadn't realized the potential of type.

R. I think it's your use of type that makes your work recognizable. Do you consider yourself a typographer?

V. Maybe, but not a very well-versed one. I am not well-versed in the rules, the classical rules of typography. There's no real foundation. If I realize anything, it is the potential of type to be an illustration and not information. I think that is how I tend to use type. I use it in a very intuitive way. There is not always a great deal of logic behind it. I use type to evoke an atmosphere or general feeling for something, or sometimes I am just being self-indulgent. And why not, if it actually communicates at the same time?

R. How do you think sleeves should communicate? Are you actually trying to bring a clear and immediate message to the buyers, or are you, on a more subtle level, trying to appeal to people's tastes?

V. I hope I appeal on a more immediate level. Most of the records we released, especially in previous years, didn't

Nigel
Grierson

Nigel Grierson is a free lance photographer and filmmaker who has been involved with the photography for 4AD sleeves since the label's first releases. He studied graphic design at Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Polytechnic under Terry Dowling between 1976 and 1979. He then attended the Royal College of Art, where he completed the post graduate photography course and scripted, directed and produced

his first film "Maximum."

He was involved full time with the 4AD compilation video "Lonely Is an

Elysium," and is currently at work on a long format video for David Sylvian.

The following interview with Nigel Grierson (N.) was conducted by Rudy VanderLans (R.).

R. What is your involvement with 4AD currently?

N. I am not employed by 4AD at the moment. I was during the shooting of the videos. My photography is mostly used for the Gazebo, Twink and This Mortal Coil projects.

There are a sufficient demand for my kind of photography, except for occasional projects such as the film "The Bulgarian Voices" or "Refugees," where my aesthetic can be employed.

But I'm not really into that approach. And I would rather maintain my own personal style anyway. I prefer to work with people who have a certain sensibility and where there are certain parallels between my work and their music.

That's the only way to work, really. Otherwise you can become a tool. Vaughan can be employed as a

collaborative partner for the sleeves and the eggs such as "Maximum," etc., because he can adapt his designs to the particular circumstances. He is used to that. Whereas with photography I believe that artists should employ me for their particular vision.

If someone wants something specific, they should use the right person.

R. How about the compilation

Vaughan Oliver

Vaughan Oliver and Nigel Grierson. Photograph by Rudy VanderLans of 43 Dovecote



video? Was it difficult to work on a project that shows a variety of bands?

N: When we set down and talked about the compilation video, it seemed like an opportunity to really present a unified feel over the whole film. Especially with the long format video, I thought it would be more interesting to give it a sort of filmic style throughout rather than do individual videos. But because of each group's individuality every video had to look totally different and original. To a degree, I've always found that a problem. Having to work for all those groups under the same label. On the one hand, you want to give the label an identity and on the other hand, you try to give each group its own.

R: I would like to talk about that some more later. First, how did you get involved with video?



FILLIGREE & SHADOW The Mental Cuts (three sleeves)

N: I studied film at the Royal College of Art in London and made a film there called "Macaroni" which I saw the really blind and I used the relationship between music and images that I used. It's a natural extension of doing both record sleeves and film work. I started doing videos. Originally we talked about a long format video for the Cactus Tunes. But that never really happened. R: So this idea was being diverted to doing the compilation video "Lonely Is An Eyecore"?

N: I was talking about doing a compilation album, because he thought it was time for another review of what aAD was about and what doesn't we were going to include of me doing a film with the Cactus Tunes. He thought it was a great opportunity to do one. Learning all the bands, and it just grew from there.

R: What do you think about the result?

N: I'm pleased with it in many ways. To be honest, after while shooting I wasn't totally inspired. I have a problem. Often while I am working on something, I start to be thinking I don't like doing something else. And while doing the video I often thought I wanted to go back to my photography.

R: Why?

N: I think it was partly because of all the responsibility. It was quite a commitment, having all the ideas of me. When we did sleeves, we used to take it from sleeve to sleeve whereas with the video it was



FILLIGREE & SHADOW The Mental Cuts (three sleeves)



get discovered until they were in the record shops. aAD doesn't get much air play and people are not aware of aAD releasing a record until they see the records on the racks. So I am aware of the importance of the sleeve designs in that situation. But I think also that the sort of people who are looking for those records are probably a bit more discerning and consider things they haven't seen before. They are a bit more open to being seduced by a little mystery. However, I don't know why something can't be immediate even if it's not immediately understandable. You don't necessarily have to read what it is. The overall shape and feel of it can be seductive. I think, or I hope anyway, that with record sleeves, there is a potential to do something that won't be fully understood or appreciated until you've had it for a few months. There is even the potential that you will see something different in it again and again.

R: How do you end up working for aAD?

V: By chance really. It coincided with the beginning of aAD. I was working for a packaging design studio and somebody there was supposed to do a sleeve for Ivo but was going away and he said "I can't do it, go meet this fellow Ivo. He just started a new record company called aAD and take your work in." Ivo liked the portfolio. I don't think he had actually seen many design students' portfolios. Anyway, thereafter we started bumping into each other at clubs at the same gigs, seeing the same bands. So there was a natural sympathy in terms of musical tastes. I suppose over the months I was able to persuade him through a few drunken conversations to get involved with the logo for aAD, a corporate identity if you like. I continued working for the design studio for about three years after I first came to London and worked for Ivo on a freelance basis. And then, in the beginning of 1981, aAD moved premises and had a bit more room for a design desk. One day Ivo came to see me and said "We are moving premises and there's space for you. Why don't you come and work for me here?" At that point, it was only Ivo and myself working for aAD. Initially, I was supposed to do more than just design. I was supposed to get involved with promotion of the label, and Ivo realized how long it actually took to put a sleeve together and how much effort it required. Especially since I do everything myself from thumbnails to finished artwork.

R: It's amazing that a small independent label such as aAD put so much importance on sleeve design and actually hired a full-time graphic designer. Was there an idea with both of you from the beginning that sleeve design was going to become a very significant part of aAD?

V: No, not at all. There was no initial plan. There was excitement shared about the potential, but it just grew slowly by sleeve and I think after a while Ivo started to appreciate the effect of consistency in approach. It evolved very slowly. And he was only going to release six or seven records a year. He was prepared to build slowly and naturally, and there was no rushiness in the beginning.

R: How long does it take to design a sleeve?

R: In the design of the sleeves are you looking for an identity for your label or for the bands?

V: The bands, definitely. But with Vaughan involved in all the design, the company's image comes through as well. And I have complete faith in what he does. There are sleeves that I am not overimpressed of, but it's very easy when you are working in a studio to become blasé about the degree of creativity and originality that is going on within sleeve design. Vaughan and I together have analyzed and developed a label identity. But there is a breadth in what they do. They have made aAD recognizable. And there are certainly sleeves that link certain sleeves together. Yet I am not looking to create a label that dominates the artists and is more important than the artists on it. The label is supposed to be a

sympathetic home and outlet for artists that I find stimulating.

R: How much input do you have in the design of the albums? Is it all up to Vaughan and the bands, and how much conversation or discussion goes on during the design process?

V: There is some conversation going on, but I don't think Vaughan really ever listens to me. I trust him to recognize his own eyes, errors that may be very different from my own. I have an opinion about the music that people record or not. I have an opinion about the sleeves and I will express that opinion, and whether it is positive or negative is up to the individuals.

R: Does he present you with very tight sketches for sleeves he is designing?

V: No, Vaughan goes on with his work. I encourage him to present ideas to the artist within a week and that they should do a sketch within the next two weeks, and I go up and look over his shoulder maybe four times a day to see what he is doing and express interest, suggest, argument or any of those things, but he is usually in control of it.

R: What is your favorite sleeve he has done?

V: It has to be the compilation, the limited edition version of the compilation "Lonely Is An Eyecore." It is an exercise of so many ideas he has developed and started in over the years and it is just for this massive feat to be able to encompass everything in one package is in his hand. Outside of that, I will

really like the entire packaging for the "Knochen Days" album cover for Modern English. I think it's a package of an album, outer and inner jackets, label, related twelve inch sleeve and poster, that was the freshest and most complete kind of work he has done; it was quite remarkable. It, which events have you been unpleasantly surprised by, if there are any?

I. Yes, the Cocteau Twins' "Victroland" has always felt incomplete to me. However, it's always really hard because you get used to things. "Allons-Guerre" I was never too pleased with either. But I balance those with something like the new Peter Norman cover for "Sleep With The Fishes" which I think is the best cover he has done in a long time. You can't be brilliant every time.

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V. It's all determined by the print release dates. It can take anywhere from four weeks to four days. Obviously I prefer four weeks. Certainly when you do every aspect from thumbnail to photography to paste-up and advertising and all related ephemera, it adds up to quite some work.

R. Do you do thumbnail sketches?

V. Yes, but mostly for my own sake. Occasionally, there will be full-size visuals drawn up, but more often not. We're given a quite open brief and we'll describe something to a band. Maybe describe what materials will be used and the situation it will be used in, but not necessarily a finished picture. This gives us room to manoeuvre. We're not always able to give a definite finished visual.

R. Just before the sleeve gets printed, what will I see or the band see as a last stage?

V. A proof.

R. At that point they can't really make any changes, can they?

V. Well, it's taken a while to tell them that. But we describe things all along and we often do have a visual made up with a print from the shot that Nigel has taken and an overlay of graphics just to give them the general feel. The bands still often like to make changes at the proof stage, though.

R. Most 4AD LPs have both outside sleeves and inside jackets designed, the center labels are designed differently each time and there is additional promotional material and often a few EPs or singles from any one LP. Most of it is full color. Is there an unlimited budget?

V. Well, we rarely stretch the printer with the printing budgets. We'll never use any special cardboard that might be more expensive. Our print cost is usually quite steady. We usually use four colors. People do send to go beyond that and use special card stocks and do five- or six- color. We feel that that's just generosity.

R. Doing album covers must be one of the more exciting disciplines within graphic design. Especially when you work for a label such as 4AD, where you enjoy a lot of freedom, you mentioned the briefs you get are quite open. Is it ever frustrating or stifling working with so much freedom?

V. It took a while to get used to the freedom at first, after having worked in a design studio. I know a lot of the designers I was working with would say "When you start working at 4AD, pass on any work to us if you can't handle all of it." And on two occasions I did, and they didn't know where to start with an open brief. You have to re-teach yourself. I suppose it was a paternal and emotional response to what they were doing. With anything like this, you need motivation from your own obsession. And if those designers didn't have that, then they found it particularly difficult to start. But I am sure you have it too, that you store ideas. If something doesn't work on one project, the idea gets stored and will come out on the next project. And it's not always difficult starting from a personal point of view, but then to persuade the band.

R. When I asked Ivo which cover he liked best, he said "Lonely Is An Eyecore." This cover is an exercise of so many ideas that Vaughan had developed and honed at over the years, it's a massive feat to



SLEEPERS WITH THE FISHES Peter Norman / Richard Thomas (from archive)

this one big project. Another problem I had was that I don't actually enjoy working with other people as much as working on my own. There were so many head trips, so many problems involved when you start working with so many people. And then if somebody isn't doing something the way you want it done, you have to explain things over and over again while trying to be as diplomatic as possible. It's a whole thing outside of the actual art. It's like running a business or something. There wasn't quite as much freedom with the videos as there generally is with the sleeves.

R. How was doing the video different from your first film "Mortician"? Didn't that require a similar amount of organization?

V. Yes, and actually after doing "Mortician" I told myself, "I would never do another video again. But time beats wounds." I guess, and a few inquiries later I said "yes" to his. There was actually a great halfway through, that I really wanted to try and do something else. I have the whole thing, but I didn't want to let the people down, especially Ivo, so I carried on.

R. You mentioned an earlier conversation that after the release of "Lonely Is An Eyecore" you were approached by various major record companies to do videos for them. What happened with all the offers?

V. I've turned them all down so far.

R. Can you afford turning down all those offers?

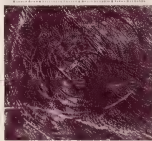
V. No, not really. But with most offers that I've turned down I didn't like the music sufficiently. A lot of pop videos are really terrible. I like videos to be more specifically about the relationship between music and film, and I like long format film. I would love to do a video for David Bowie, or for Harold Budd. I see something like that as a great possibility, something completely new. That art has not been explored at all. I just don't find the area of pop

music interesting at the moment, if you can't see it.

R. Maybe it hasn't been explored properly.

V. Yes, but that's partly because pop videos are always done for a single. The videos are there to actually promote that single. And singles are always the most

THE HORRORS ANTHEM FOR THE MURDER SOCIETY
Richard Thomas / Peter Norman / David Bowie / Harold Budd / David Bowie / Harold Budd



BLACK Francis, Poem

(BLACK FRANCIS ABOUT "ED IS DEAD") "THERE WAS THIS HORRIBLE WEIRD GIRL AT MY HIGH SCHOOL WHO WORE A BURLAP SACK. CORDS, AND RUBBER SHOES. I'D TALK TO HER, BUT NO-ONE ELSE WOULD. I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HER, THEN LATER I FOUND OUT SHE'D BEEN MENTALLY AFFECTED AFTER A CAR ACCIDENT FIVE YEARS LATER. I WENT BACK AND SAW HER RIDING A BIKE AROUND, EXACTLY THE SAME AS SHE EVER WAS. EXCEPT SHE WAS REALLY SUBNINUED." (Melody Maker)

reemerge." Now, if working with full color and reasonable budgets and having a very fair amount of freedom is not intimidating, how do you approach a job such as "Lonely Is An Eyegore?" As a commission piece, both graphically and musically, it should reflect the company or its boss. Did you approach it as just another album cover?

V I approach every album cover thinking it has to be better than the last one. There has to be progression. Although "Eyegore" was not so much a progression as a consummation of ideas. That was a good quote from Ivo, it was certainly an enactment of ideas. It shows what I mentioned earlier, that you do some ideas, the textures I'd been collecting and certain ways of doing things. In a sense the job was to reflect the label as a whole. It couldn't necessarily concentrate too much on one band. And because of that I didn't think it called for an individual photograph or one image. It needed more of an overall textural approach, more of a packaging feel.

R Are the textures you use on "Lonely Is An Eyegore," found in nature or are they done specifically for "Lonely Is An Eyegore"?

V They all come out of this catalogue I keep, in which I store textures I've produced at one time or another in between jobs.

R So you just keep them around, waiting for the right time to use them?

V Yes.

R When you work for a record label, you more or less have to deal with two clients. In your case they are Ivo and the band. Does that ever complicate the design process, and does the sleeve ever end up as a compromise of respective issues?

V The only compromise would be between 25 envelope and the bands. Ivo will usually step down. If he doesn't like the design but the band and I do, then he'll say go ahead. He is really good in that respect and he's good also in that maybe three months later, he'll say "I actually now see what you were talking about, it has grown on me."

R In an interview with you in *Ipso Facto* magazine, you were quoted as saying that you don't mind that your artwork is being mass-produced as record sleeves and you said that's one of the great things about graphic design.

V That was in response to a question whether the work we do is art, but that's something that is open to the viewer. The sleeves wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for the music and for the commission, in which case it becomes commercial art. I think that it's better that it does reach a lot more homes than it could on a gallery wall.

R I agree, but how do feel about the fact that no matter how successful a piece of graphic design becomes, and no matter how many people see it, the designer will in most cases remain anonymous to the audience? Do you admire artists and the attention they receive for their work, and would you want your work to be considered in the context of art?

V I suppose so, because we do enjoy having exhibitions, showing our work on a gallery wall is fun, but at the same time that would take it away from the music. And I much rather see it in conjunction with the music. If it does complement the music, if it is successful in reflecting the atmosphere of the music, I am happier than if I were just a piece on a wall. I do definitely see us working within the arena of commercial art and hopefully being appreciated within that arena, and maybe occasionally considered outside of that in a more artistic vein, but it doesn't really fascinate me if it's not considered art. We are working with commercial briefs and commercial restraint. If it really inspired to a more artistic vein, I would be working in etching or print-making.

R But in print-making or etching, the chance of being noticed and actually communicating through your work is almost nonexistent. That's why I feel graphic design as an art form is not receiving the recognition it should get. Good graphic design communicates, not only because it is produced in multiples, and can have a real impact upon its viewers. And communication is the bottom line for all visual arts, including design.

V It boils down to the message you are communicating. No matter how well something is communicated, it all depends on the value of the message. Maybe a lot of designers are communicating the message perfectly, but was the message worthwhile in the first place? And that's true for artists as well.

R Who are your design heroes?

V In terms of design there isn't anybody, really. That's again probably due to my ignorance of design history. I have in the past been more motivated by painting, film and literature. It's only recently that I have started to hunt around for books on the Bauhaus and looking at Caspender. I mentioned earlier the Quas twins, they were a big inspiration. There is one poster they did for one of their films. I didn't manage to get a copy of it, but I still got a picture of it in the back of my head. They used various typefaces which I haven't been able to find anywhere. They also use a lot of hand-drawn typefaces. There is one album cover they did for Duet Times that is a great example of their illustration and typography work. You should try to get a hold of it, it's fantastic.

R It's interesting that your inspiration comes from a different direction than graphic design. Most designers I know will pick up last year's design annuals for inspiration.

V Yes, I couldn't believe that. At my first job, there were these senior designers, who after being briefed would do exactly that, look at last year's answers. Inspiration should come from other sources. We were talking earlier about having the same aesthetics as a musician. You might be working in different disciplines but you have similar

commercial aspect of any musician's output. They always pick the most catchy songs, therefore pop videos never get to be anything other than that. People don't make pop videos about non-commercial music.

R And does

R Yes, and it's a shame that some of the biggest

complaints, even if

experiment because they

have the money to do that

properly. That was also a

problem with the compilation

video, it was done with a very

low budget. Low budgets

never really affect the look of

record sleeves, but we're

violating the really intrinsic

creativity. There are some

budget restrictions for the

show, I mean, I don't get

paid as much by A&M as I

would by a major record

company and we do a whole

album session in the back

bedroom, instead of using a

studio. But with Ivo you can

only cut so many corners.

You do actually need a lot of

money just to make films if

you want to do it well. Is

Are you more satisfied with

the results of your

photographs?

R I am reasonably happy

with the results. But I have

certain ideas about the kind

of look I would like to push.

Something possibly less

abstract than what I've been

doing on record sleeves. The

degree of abstraction has

come about through the kind

of music it does for. I would

like to do some more portrait

work, things like that. Not

straight portrait work, but

bringing in more human

elements, which is what I

would like to do. I've started to do

more personal work along

these lines.

R What are your plans for

the future?

R It's mostly self-

exploration. When I look at a

commission of my work, I

can pick out maybe one or

two pictures that really do

something for me and the

rest is only halfway towards

anything. These images will

inspire me and push me to do

more of the kind of work

they represent.

R Did any of these particular

images ever end up on a

sleeve?

R Probably the *The Mental*

Gold sleeve for "I'll End In

Tears" and also the poster for

"*Ylgras & Shadow*." The

picture we used for the poster

I still like a lot, the one with

the hand over the eye. The

photograph on "I'll End In

Tears" is a little more dreamy





inspiration and ideas, really. I think I took a lot of inspiration from music. At college for instance, I always liked Brian Eno's music, right back to his early albums when he was singing. I loved his lyrics. And then I discovered that Russell Mills had started working on illustrations inspired by him. I already enjoyed Russell's work outside of that and then to see those two people collaborate on the "More Dark Than Stars" book! And then to find that Russell had book jackets for Samuel Beckett, who is one of my favorite authors.

R: You worked with Russell Mills on a series of book jackets, didn't you?

V: Yes, for a chap called Ian McEwan.

R: How did you get in touch with Russell Mills?

V: Well, I've never been good at telling people that I like them for fear of sounding too flattery or whatever. But when I came down to London, I went to this exhibition of Russell Mills's work and enjoyed it so much that I wrote my first fan letter. I mentioned Ian McEwan. This is about six or seven years ago, and he wrote back and said a few nice things and suggested I read this or that, read a bit of Marcel Duchamp etc. But the correspondence went no further. Then a couple of years ago, when we released the first *This Mortal Coil* album, Russell actually rang up when he saw the album, spoke to me and said I love the music. It's renewed my faith in the music business, and the packaging is superb! And he asked him to come down and meet the people who did it. And we got on fine, we chatted about Samuel Beckett and such, and about a year later the Ian McEwan project came up. I embarrassingly reminded him of the fan letter I'd written and talked to him about how it was a nice completion of the circle.

R: Let's return to the sleeves. The only critique I have on your work is that I can recognize it as 4AD design. I feel that with sleeve design, you only create to create an identity for a band/label their music. Most 4AD records I recognize as 4AD/Owen/Gerson products first, and later I recognize them as a record by a particular band. Is that fair to the band?

V: I think what we try to do is give every band its own identity, but since the ideas come from one desk, there is also an overall identity for the label. I suppose because of the personal freedom that we are given, there are obviously elements of Vaughan Oliver in there, but the inspiration does spring from the music and from having to create something that shows that it is 4AD. So hopefully Vaughan Oliver doesn't get in the way too much. But personally, I feel there is enough diversity in the designs.

R: Do you feel you have reached the point as a graphic designer that you know exactly how each job will end up looking?

V: Not yet. I think that would happen if I could come up with it. There is still an element of risk involved in each job I do. The evening before every record comes in, I have nightmares about it. It can turn out completely different from what I intended. But I do get a lot of ideas from the nightmares. I am still worried enough to keep up a healthy interest, even into my sleeping hours.

R: So chance plays a big role in the success or failure of the designs?

V: Yes, and that's what makes you want to do the next one.

R: Last night I was looking at your sleeve designs quite intensely, and there are some that I can't recognize as Vaughan Oliver sleeves. "Treasure" and "Miss Bulgakov" for instance, are typographically not as strong as some of the others. The type almost seems an afterthought.

V: "Treasure" was done quite a while ago and I wasn't so happy with it myself although I still do like the script logo and the idea of putting the track titles on the front. But "Miss Bulgakov" I like a lot! I love the title type.

R: There you use of three dimensional borders seems awkward. On most of your sleeves the type is used very flat, in harmony with the imagery. "Pump Up The Volume" is a good example. Here you only acknowledge the flatness of the sleeve and make perfect use of overlapping offset colors in order to create transparency, you are using type as illustration. The "Vox Bulgakov" type seems contrasted and not in harmony with the image.

V: With "Vox Bulgakov" I wanted to actually create a mood that reflected the sadness of what might have been the original Bulgarian sleeves. I only saw the cover of the original Bulgarian sleeve, and I tried to use something that was evocative of what could have possibly been a box's typeface that was used in Bulgaria. But it was off the top of my head, I made it up. I don't think that the box type was in use was really successful. I would have liked that to be a more photographic reproduction of a wooden box.

R: A real landscape of mine is the Colobour album with the Japanese textile print on it. I guess this sleeve, with the use of Round imagery and collage, shows the influence of Tom Dowling?

V: I think it was the best opportunity to use found imagery because Colobour is stealing all the time in terms of the music. They take clips from television commercials and film and from other people's records. They take them out of the original context and put them into their own context, making it something new or different. For this album, I used a printer's waste sheet. The entire image as you see it on the sleeve was ready made. I didn't do anything to it. A friend of mine had brought it back from Japan. He worked there in the 1980s. It was originally a textile catalogue. Some of the sheets had been overlaid by the printer with these peach labels. I thought the coincidence of the imagery, the peach labels and the coincidence of these beautiful Japanese women was just so nice. And imagine something that was thrown away! It was on the printer's floor or in his wastebin and picked up and looked at in a different way. That seemed to match so well with the way Colobour work. It was probably one of the easiest sleeves we've put together. Again, it was something that had been around for a long time and I

then what I would like to do now. I would like to do something that has slightly more to do with print. The "Vox Bulgakov" portfolio has a more mysterious and human element to it, using the eye to communicate with the viewer, apart from the texture of the picture. The seven sleeves of "Vox Bulgakov" are probably my favorite designs overall. The typography and photographic seem to be in perfect balance, the subtle use of color, too, is very subtle. How do you feel about the main publishers of your photographs here: the super and black dimensions and the screen that has the photo in half?

M: I am not sure who thought of the actual idea of giving a sleeve design, but I think it worked well. There are certain effects which I can do in a photograph that would require that the photograph be reproduced in full color, which might not actually look as good as when you use color. One other printing trick is that you can use a paper or black and silver dyes. Both Vaughan and myself are so aware of that. Some photographs come from a purely photographic background and they will be worried when a designer would suggest something that they are not aware of the possibilities of printing.

R: There are generally two ways Vaughan combines type and photography. On the one hand, it's a very strong separation of the two. The image is presented as if it was hanging on a gallery wall. I find that in most of his sleeves the first method works best, resulting in the most satisfying result with type and photography enhancing each other because of the image. I agree. On reflection I don't think that the image on the outside sleeve of "Colobour" is strong enough. The outer sleeve image is in with imagery. But I think it's a shame that a record sleeve cannot present a photograph in that particular way. Generally, if you did have a picture presented in that way, it would surely be better or stronger image. This sleeve is

saying "Look at this, but then you get lost in a little patterned corner. I think that worked." I think it was also a reaction to most Colobour sleeve sleeves we had done. We usually use a historical photograph going completely across the cover. R: What is the usual process for a Colobour sleeve design?

M: They usually give us a tape before the record is actually cut. Their guidelines tend to be rather strict. The main thing is that they don't like anything linear and they don't like to see objects which are easily recognizable and present certain connotations of the music. All objects have associations and they will turn around and say "What's that object got to do with our music?" They have very little "intellectual" arguments about what each thing is about. Whatever it is they have a say in it and in the point of view and they don't want to interpret that into anything else.

afterwards. That's how we ended up doing such abstract sleeves for the Colobour. With this Mortal Coil, on the other hand, we ended up using more literal imagery because the songs are more literal or audible. And there is a quality to that in the images. The images are more figurative and not purely abstract. Also the main reason on the *This Mortal Coil* album was very fortunate. That's how we decided to use the girl as female figurative element. The women are synthesized a lot and they blend into the music as a woman, which goes on the idea to blend the picture of the girl together with a natural background.

R: How much of this does the viewer actually experience? M: I think people tend to be unconsciously. The sleeve art is certainly in the true sense of the word. The image actually develops from the music that is there in the first place. A lot of people would describe it as really different, strange. Again, I think there are people, and the viewer will eventually recognize that. I explain to me then why you use a photograph of a person in the *Oh I See You* album. "Oh I See You" there you use a very explicit and literal image of a hand that plays purely instrumental music.

about the way it came out. I thought it came out quite good. It's important to consider the relationship between imagery when you move from an outer to an inner sleeve. It can be too much if you have imagery all over the sleeves. So what we often do is get the inside image as a kind of make it much lighter. It will give you a bit of an air. Sometimes it works to just have type on a plain white background for the side of cover. And I think that worked very well on "The Moon And The Melancholy," the new Vaughan had used the turn on.

R: Let's return to what you were referred to as a dilettante. Having to give an identity to both a label and its bands is difficult. Generally gD has been accused for overshowing the bands.

N: There is always a bit of criticism. Bands sometimes think that it can be leaving having to empty it. Develop for every sleeve. They would argue that it's pushing a style too much. And they might not want to be part of that overall label identity. But the truth is that they all are allowed to have their own identity and we always try to cater to it as much as possible. And I don't think we try to push a style. I don't feel that we are trying to do the same pattern on each sleeve. And I don't think that when you put any two gD sleeves together that they look similar. It's a style, but all of it fits together that the style emerges.

R: Does the criticism bother you?

N: That criticism only bothers me in a situation where I feel it is true. And the only one that is possibly true is when the packaging is overdone with too many images or whatever, and subsequently would work around the music as a sense. I think that the music is still the most important thing. Once you get your record on the shelves, it's a creative statement anyway, but in terms of the kind of record, I think that you can get on the record that you like on the sleeve. If the same groups worked for another independent record company they wouldn't have the overall quality that they receive at gD.

R: Are the bands usually happy with the sleeves?

N: It tends to vary. People always tend to be most happy with something that hasn't got anything to do with them. As a label we look at a sleeve or a video of one of the other groups and will say "Oh yes, that's perfect for their music." But when it comes to their own, since they are so close to it, they will never be perfectly happy. And I think that they are always not happy or mixed if it's not the fact that they'll never be perfectly happy with any kind of visual presentation of their own work.

R: What approach has worked best for you when you design a sleeve?

N: The way we've managed to please everybody in the past is by trying to maintain a truth in relation to the music. We try to bring out certain aspects that are already there in the music without imposing something that has nothing to do with it. That's probably what our work has been based for in the past. The Cocoon Twins find in particular have said that the sleeves are often a perfect representation of their music. So we've been very conscious with the other



LOVE: 9 COCOON TWINS (THOMAS GUTHRIE)

was just waiting for the appropriate moment to use it.

R: There were no problems with copyrights?

V: They haven't been able to use the same sleeve in Japan. The lady in the red dress was a singing star in her own right in the 1950s and is now married to a Japanese member of parliament. All of them were part of an opera group. And I think the Japanese record company that released the record was able to trace all but one of the women and get permission from them and get permission from the pouch label company. It came down to getting permission from the last woman whom they couldn't trace. So they weren't able to use the design.

R: If that sleeve was the easiest to produce, which was the most difficult?

V: Usually the Cocoon Twins projects are the more difficult, because they are very good at telling us what they don't want but rarely give us a direction for what they do want. It always appears to be a very free brief that they get from them. They will say "This is the music, we've done this, this is the way to think, and maybe, use a little bit of red and a little bit of green, and some warm tints here," and they try to describe atmospheres like that, but there is never any hint at subject matter. In fact, they don't like subject matter. So it's up to us to try and create color studies by whatever means.

R: How do you go about that?

V: Lately we've been doing it with paints in water. We create layered effects using layers of glass between the camera and a tank of water with color in it. We then put different colors in between layers of glass combined with stuff like glycerine.

R: Who? You mean Nigel Gimson and yourself?

V: Yes, when it comes to Cocoon Twins and This Mortal Coil, I often work with Nigel.

R: With the Cocoon Twins and This Mortal Coil sleeves you have created a truly personal style and they are among some of your best pieces. Are they your personal favorites in terms of music?

V: The Cocoon Twins and This Mortal Coil are probably classics to our own aesthetic, so we already have ideas or a vocabulary and visual way of presenting the music. We might be doing photos for ourselves that end up fitting the mood of a This Mortal Coil album perfectly.

R: I recently bought two Wolfgang Press albums, "Standing Up Straight" and "The Legendary Wolfgang Press And Other Tall Stories." Are they very specific about what they want?

V: Yes, they are actually the only band that will come to us with specific subject matter that they like to use. They are a band that I would like some more personal freedom with. I love what they are doing musically and I think that more personal freedom would allow another dimension to our work. In a sense, it did with the lyric sheet of "Standing Up Straight." I mean we weren't really allowed enough time with that one, we produced the entire thing within three days.

R: But with those two sleeves you would have wanted more personal freedom?

V: Yes, definitely. The Wolfgang Press would come to us with a paintings that to me didn't reflect the music. Their attitude of self-awareness in approach could be reflected as a different way. I would love to have the opportunity to reflect with typography or a different sort of imagery the awkwardness and power that comes across in their music. I guess that is one of the problems when you are working in-house and have a reputation for doing sleeves that might be construed as being quite subtle and modest. I guess they don't see the potential in me to do something that will fit their work as well. But that's a problem we have to learn to deal with. When you are recognized for a certain type of work, it can put people off approaching you. That is the danger of getting pigeonholed.

ROBIN GUTHRIE, Cocoon Twins

"THE SLEEVES ARE FOR PUTTING RECORDS IN. I WOULDN'T WANT PEOPLE TO BUY OUR RECORDS BECAUSE THEY SAW A PICTURE OF US. I MEAN THEY

WOULDN'T ANYWAY." (O Magazine)

By Daniel Kapelian / Translated from the French by Michael Axinn

I don't know when it stopped raining, nor do I know how many days the electricity's been out. I'm all alone, it's starting to get too long now. The Sun remains in perpetual eclipse. It's getting colder and colder. I've already burned all the wood, the chairs, the table, the furnishings, the paintings. Tonight I'm going for the library. I'll throw the books onto the fire one after another, clap my hands together and dance around the flames like a huge pagan rite, cheeks aglow, eyes ashine, all by myself

Carlands of words go up, ink evaporates, pages writhe painfully in the teeth of the blaze, the empty shells of coals collapse, the beautiful phrases crumble, little by little ignorance and bliss make themselves felt.

I had a good time, still I want more. I saved a single page from Verlaine, the poet of wicked airs, who coveted "music above all else." Good, tonight I burn the records

I try the stereo one last time. Nothing. The dials unlit, the headphones a silent breath between my ears. I try to remember, a few scattered licks, a vague beat and some stupid lyrics come back then float off into oblivion, it's useless to insist. I start with the record covers. In a moment, the designs are reduced to ashes, a real straw fire. Discs twist under the heat, the vinyl a boiling liquid which flows in torrents like raging lava. I'm crying, the tears burn. I keep dancing but have less and less space, for the spirits of all the dead have invaded the room to dance with me. I see myself in the glass. I am not yet turned into an invisible ghost, it won't be long. I've never been so pale, traces of soot mixed with sweat mark my face like primitive war paint.

I'm stretched out on the ground in a puddle of gasoline, I cannot fall any further. My last candle burns between my feet. When it goes, the gas will catch fire and I who dream of heat will fall to a tranquil sleep on a grand bed of flames as I read with clear voice the message I found the morning you left.

"I wanted to tell you, we'll never have another chance to meet like we just did. It only happens once. The best thing for you to do is forget me, even if I stay with you until the end. You mustn't be afraid of me anymore, I won't go away or move faster than you. Without me you're nothing, I'm the only one who's faithful to you. So turn back around and take a look at what's in front of you, find the Sun with your eyes and stare it in the face. Do it for me. You who forever prevent me from doing the same."

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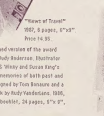
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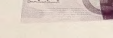


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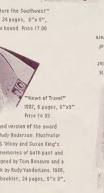
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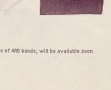
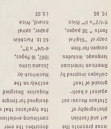
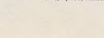
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